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PLANE

FAIRBANKS-(AP)-THE QUICK-ACTING COMMANDER OF A U.S. AIR FORCE PLANE SAID LAST NIGHT HE ORDERED THE CHIEF GUNNER TO "FIRE BACK" WHEN HIS B-50 BOMBER WAS ATTACKED BY A RUSSIAN-TYPE MIG-15 HIGH OFF THE COAST OF SIBERIA SUNDAY.

LT. COL. ROBERT S. RICH, 35, TOLD A PRESS CONFERENCE AT EIELSON AIR FORCE BASE NEAR HERE HE TRIED TO ESCAPE THE ATTACKER WITH A 390 MILE PER HOUR DIVE INTO A CLOUD BANK AND FIRED ONLY AFTER THE MIG HAD OPENED UP.

THE ATTACK OCCURRED AS THE U.S. PLANE, ON A ROUTINE WEATHER FLIGHT, CRUISED NORTH 25 MILES OUT TO SEA FROM THE SIBERIAN COAST. THE AIR FORCE SAID APPARENTLY NEITHER CRAFT WAS DAMAGED IN THE THIRD SUCH SKY ENCOUNTER BETWEEN PLANES OF THE EAST AND WEST IN A WEEK.

PRESIDENT EISENHOWER DECLINED TO COMMENT ON THE LATEST INCIDENT IN THE COLD WAR AMID CONGRESSIONAL DEMANDS FOR AN INVESTIGATION AND WARNINGS THE RUSSIANS MIGHT ATTACK AMERICAN COMMERCIAL PLANES ON THE ORIENT RUN.

THE B-50, ON TEMPORARY DUTY WITH THE 15TH WEATHER RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON AT EIELSON FROM FORBES FIELD, TOPEKA, KAS., WAS APPROXIMATELY 100 MILES EAST AND SLIGHTLY NORTH OF THE HUGE RUSSIAN MILITARY BASE AT PETROPAVLOVSK ON THE KAMCHATKA PENINSULA WHEN IT WAS ATTACKED.

JC907A 3/18